

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINGST 05216 011253Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20
SY-05 IO-14 COME-00 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05
/112 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2066
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

UNCLAS KINGSTON 5216

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PORS, SOCI, JM
SUBJECT: SUPPRESSION OF CRIME ACT EXTENDED

REF: KINGSTON 4337

1. THE JAMAICAN PARLIAMENT HAS APPROVED A 180-DAY
EXTENSION OF THE SUPPRESSION OF CRIME ACT WHICH EMPOWERS THE
MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY TO DECLARE CERTAIN AREAS AS
"SPECIAL AREAS" IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC SAFETY OR ORDER,
OR FOR THE PURPOSE OF PREVENTING OR DETECTING CRIME.
IN A DESIGNATED "SPECIAL AREA" A CURFEW MAY BE SET AND
SEARCHES MADE WITHOUT WARRENTS. THE GOJ SOUGHT THIS
FURTHER 180-DAY EXTENSION OF THE ACT, FIRST INTENDED
AS A TEMPORARY MEASURE IN 1974, IN VIEW OF THE CONTINUING
HIGH LEVEL OF CRIME ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS.

2. ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS WITH ITS POTENTIAL
FOR VIOLENT CRIMES REMAINS A MAJOR PROBLEM. THE
GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT DESPITE THE "PEACE
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TRUCE" IN WEST KINGSTON IN JANUARY FIREARMS HAVE NOT
YET BEEN HANDED IN THERE.

3. ACCORDING TO THE GOJ SPOKESMAN KEBLE MUNN,
MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, CRIMES OF VIOLENCE
HAVE INCREASED IN THE MAJORITY OF THE NATION'S PARISHES,

INCLUDING THE GREATER KINGSTON AREA, AND SWITCHBLADES ARE MORE FREQUENTLY INVOLVED. MR. MUNNBJC DESCRIBED RECENT INDUSTRIAL UNREST AND THE UNUSUAL DUTIES ASKED OF THE SECURITY FORCES, E.G. IN PORT, PRISON AND HOSPITAL WORK, AND REFERRED TO INDICATORS THAT THIS UNREST COULD LAST FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS. THE OPPOSITION SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT IN EXTENDING THE ACT, BUT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE MEASURE LEGALIZES THE H NCELLATION OF CERTAIN CIVIL RIGHTS AND NOTED THE IMPLICIT ADMISSION THAT WHAT WAS INTRODUCED AS A TEMPORARY MEASURE IN 1974 IS STILL NECESSARY AT THE END OF 1978. THE GOJ APPEALED AGAIN FOR THE SURRENDERING OF ILLEGAL FIREARMS AND WARNED ALL PERSONS ASSISTING CRIMINALS OF THE PENALTIES THEY RISK.

4. COMMENT: THE INCREASE IN CRIMES OF VIOLENCE REPORTED

BY THE GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORT OF ITS REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF THE SUPPRESSION OF CRIME ACT IS AT VARIANCE WITH AN EARLIER, MORE POSITIVE PRESS ACCOUNT (SEE REFTEL) OF THE CRIME SITUATION. NONETHELESS, WHATEVER DIFFERENCE

THERE MAY BE IN ESTIMATES OF CRIME TRENDS, THEY IS CLEARLY STRONG BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR THE SECURITY FORCES AND CONCERN THAT LAW AND ORDER BE PRESERVED IN THE NATION. UNCLASSIFIED

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IN FACT, IN SPEAKING FOR THE OPPOSITION, FORMER PRIME

MINISTER HUGH SHEARER URGED AN UPGRADING OF SALARIES, ALLOWANCES, EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE SECURITY FORCES. THE AUSTERE ECONOMIC PROGRAM FOR 1978 GIVES LITTLE CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF CRIME ABATEMENT. THE GOJ SPOKESMAN REFLECTED THIS MOOD WHEN HE CLOSED THE DISCUSSION BY OBSERVING THAT "WE ARE STILL UNDER SOME CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE" AND THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO SAY WHEN THE ACT WOULD NO LONGER BE NECESSARY. IRVING

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